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**Will Carne, President  
Michigan Works! The Job Force Board**

We live in a time of unprecedented social, demographic, and economic change. Domestic and global influences are reshaping the way businesses and communities in rural America must operate if they are to survive, grow and flourish.

The impact of today's global economy and new social and economic challenges, combined with increased competition, lower profit margins, rising energy and healthcare costs and other business related expenses are forcing rural businesses and organizations to become leaner, more creative and to work harder and smarter to succeed.

## WORKFORCE BOARDS HELPING MEET EMPLOYER NEEDS THROUGH REGIONAL SKILLS ALLIANCES

In this time of rapidly changing competitive challenges, Upper Peninsula employers are telling us they do not have time and resources to cast about alone to find the right economic and workforce answers for their industry.

Businesses are telling us they need help to diagnose their workforce challenges quickly, accurately, and immediately identify strategies for addressing challenges. So, when an important industry that helps support the economy in the Upper Peninsula region of Michigan saw an emerging and persistent workforce problem, who did it turn to? Its local workforce development system.

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm recently announced the formation of the Central UP Tourism Regional Skills Alliance, a new regionally and industry-based Michigan Regional Skills Alliance (MiRSA) led by Michigan Works!

Through the newly formed Central UP Tourism Regional Skills Alliance, Michigan Works! is working side-by-side with employers, K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, local Workforce and Economic Development Boards and the state to develop a comprehensive career development system for the Upper Peninsula Tourism Industry.

The Central UP Tourism Regional Skills Alliance is providing a structured, supported forum in which the workforce challenges of the hospitality and tourism industry can be analyzed and addressed. Michigan Works! is helping employers address the tribulations they experience in more sophisticated ways than they could alone, and is helping ensure that jobseekers find quality

employment and workers get the necessary training to do the work employers need today and in the future.

There are now 32 MiRSAs statewide, representing a diverse group of industries, including health care, manufacturing, construction, wood forest products, hospitality and tourism, and biotechnology.

With the help of Michigan Works! and the local Workforce Development System, these employer led initiatives are bringing coherence to the public response to worker shortages, skill shortages, training mismatches, and other problems. They are helping industry foster effective solutions to systemic and structural problems.

The UP currently has 6 Michigan Regional Skills Alliances; The Upper Peninsula Health Care Roundtable, UP Regional Industrial Manufacturers Skills Alliance, The UP Construction RSA, the UP Electrical Line Tech Program, the Wood Forest Products RSA and the newly formed Central UP Tourism Regional Skills Alliance.

Michigan Works! currently convenes 4 of the UP MiRSAs and is a key partner and collaborator in 2. The UP MiRSAs are providing Upper Peninsula workers with critical job training and providing Michigan businesses with the skilled workers they need to grow in today's 21st century economy.

For more information about the Central UP Tourism Regional Skills Alliance, or to get involved in any of the Upper Peninsula MiRSAs, contact Michigan Works! The Job Force Board at 906-789-0558 Ext. 0.